

NEW TOOLS, NEW EXPECTATIONS: THE LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE AND INTEREST IN IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGIES AMONG GENERATION Z. EVIDENCE FROM POLAND

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Purpose: The aim of the study is to analyse the level of interest in using innovative tourism products among Generation Z, including products based on immersive technologies.

Design/methodology/approach: The research methods were based on an online survey (CAWI) conducted among 185 young tourists from Poland, following the TDM methodology.

Findings: The findings extend existing theoretical discussions on the role of technological advancement in shaping contemporary travel experiences, con-firming that innovation acceptance among young tourists depends not only on techno-logical sophistication but also on perceived usefulness, simplicity, and emotional value. An important direction for the development of product innovations is their considerable diversity, based on niche tourist preferences. This will allow personalization of tourism offers and accessibility to diverse tourist segments.

Research implications: This study contributes to the growing body of research on Generation Z's tourism behavior by identifying the differentiation in their attitudes toward immersive and non-immersive innovations and by integrating these insights into the broader framework of innovation adoption in tourism.

Practical implications: the study provides tourism enterprises and destination managers with evidence that smart, us-er-friendly technologies, those embedded in daily travel routines—should remain the core focus of product development, while immersive solutions such as VR, AR, and AI should be gradually introduced as complementary tools enhancing the sensory and experiential dimensions of travel. The research also suggests that communication strategies aimed at Generation Z should emphasize authenticity, interactivity, and personalization rather than purely technological novelty.

Originality/value: Generation Z seeks new, emotionally engaging, and unique travel experiences, preferring technologies that enhance comfort and personalization. Advanced digital tools play a complementary role, highlighting the need for the gradual implementation of innovations that integrate functionality with authentic and tangible travel experiences.

Keywords: tourism innovation; generation Z; digital tourism; technology adoption; tourist experience.

Category of the paper: Research paper, Case study.

1. Introduction

Rapid socio-cultural, technological, economic, and health-related changes are leading to the implementation of innovations—particularly radical product innovations—within tourism service offerings. However, existing studies indicate that tourism services still lag these changes, especially technological ones, with incremental, imitative, and adaptive innovations remaining dominant (Panfiluk, 2021).

Tourism service offerings should meet the expectations of all participants in the tourism market, including Generation Z. Generation Z represents an entirely different tourism segment, displaying distinct personality traits and behaviors compared to previous generations. It is characterized by high digital competence, a natural presence in social media environments, and a strong need for interactive, emotional experiences and online information exchange (Stepaniuk, Misiewicz, 2025; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2019).

In their online behavior, there is a tendency to imitate the behaviors of other users, resulting from two mechanisms: herd behavior — succumbing to group influence and replicating the majority's actions—and behavioral mimicry — imitating the emotions and reactions of observed users (e.g., idols, friends, influencers). This translates into a strong influence of feedback, authority figures, and popular content (Stepaniuk, Misiewicz, 2025).

Their cognitive and emotional behaviors in VR/AR environments are determined by factors such as immersion, interactivity, and visualization, which affect their travel decisions and engagement with tourism content (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2019). They expect personalized service offerings from tourism providers—distinct from everyday experiences (Elshaer, Marzouk, 2024).

A response to these expectations and the future breakthroughs in the tourism industry may be radical product innovations built on advanced technologies and artificial intelligence (Sigalat-Signes et al., 2020); Buhalis et al., 2023). These innovations enable visitors to experience events in ways impossible in the real world (Buhalis, Sinarta, 2019). They also have a profound impact on the creation of strong emotions and experiences during exploration, which translates into enhanced tourism experiences (Liberato et al., 2018). An analysis of the literature on Generation Z's tourist behavior and its relationship with innovation and information technologies reveals several significant research gaps that limit a full understanding of this consumer group and its role in the future development of tourism. (Robinson, Schänzel, 2019a) point out that the literature concerning Generation Z remains very limited, especially within academic research. Most available works are marketing reports and market analyses, with a lack of in-depth scientific studies addressing their motivations, experiences, and travel behaviors. The authors observe that most studies address planning processes and motivations rather than actual travel behavior. Consequently, empirical knowledge concerning the real behavior of young tourists within destination environments remains limited.

The shortage of research on the interests, behaviors, and tourism expectations of Generation Z is also confirmed by Haddouche & Salomone, (2018), Skinner et al., (2022), Entina et al., (2021). Zhou et al., (2023) emphasize that most studies focus on intentions rather than on actual actions undertaken by users during trips. Tavakoli & Mura, (2015) further confirm that too many studies are conceptual or technology-oriented, with few examining real tourist responses (Tavakoli, Mura, 2015). Khoo-Lattimore et al., (2019) note a continued lack of observational and experimental research on user behavior in VR/AR tourism contexts. Konieczna & Trybuś-Borowiecka, (2025) highlight a shortage of analyses regarding attitudes toward innovative tourism solutions, such as mobile applications, virtual reality (VR), or artificial intelligence (AI). As they observe, representatives of Generation Z “do not fully utilize” the potential of modern technologies in the travel process, despite being their natural users. This gap is supported by research in the gastronomy sector conducted by Meepprom et al., (2025), who indicate that knowledge about the impact of product novelty and risk perception on the acceptance of innovation among young consumers remains very limited—even though this group demonstrates high openness to experimentation and new sensory experiences. Moreover, there is a regional gap, as most studies are case studies conducted in diverse geographical areas and socio-economic conditions, focusing primarily on highly developed countries. Therefore, there is a clear need for data from other regions, including Central and Eastern Europe (Robinson, Schänzel, 2019; Vestola, Kirsten, 2025).

In summary, the current state of research indicates that although knowledge about Generation Z as tourism consumers is gradually expanding, there remains a weak connection between innovation theory and consumer behavior and tourism practice. There is a shortage of empirical analyses concerning actual behavior and the use of innovative products in the travel practices of Generation Z. The aim of the study is to analyze the level of interest in using innovative tourism products among Generation Z, including products based on immersive technologies.

The article consists of four parts. The first part provides a literature review focusing on trends in the development of innovative tourism products and the current state of research on Generation Z’s tourism preferences and expectations. The second part discusses the research methodology. The third part presents the results of a study conducted among Generation Z tourists. The fourth part expands on the findings and includes a discussion. The article concludes with conclusions, theoretical contributions, practical implications, and limitations related to future.

2. Innovations in Tourism and the Consumption Patterns of Generation Z Tourists - Literature review

2.1. Innovations in the Tourism Services Market

Implementing product innovations in tourism services is the only way for enterprises to adapt to an increasingly aware and demanding consumer. This challenge is complex, as the tourism industry is recognised as a sector with a low level of innovativeness. It is dominated by imitative, incremental and adaptive innovations, often referred to in the literature as secondary innovations (Sundbo et al., 2007; Hjalager, 2010; Krizaj et al., 2012; Allsos et al., 2014; Pozzo et al., 2023; Panfiluk, 2021). Booyens & Rogerson (2016) report that three-quarters of implemented innovations are incremental, whereas only one-quarter of surveyed enterprises introduce novel innovations with varying market reach (Panfiluk, 2021). Most effects of implemented innovations are visible only at the regional level (Camisón, Monfort-Mir, 2012). Despite this, the implemented innovations have enhanced both the quality of customer service and the tourism experience in the real world, stimulating the senses, emotions, taste and aesthetic appreciation (Pricope Vancia et al., 2023). Contemporary innovations based on advanced technologies and artificial intelligence enable experiences that cannot be achieved in physical reality (Koochang et al., 2023). It is recognised that they will drive future breakthroughs in the tourism industry (Sigalat-Signes et al., 2020; Sigala, 2023).

The first group consists of innovations developed using operational IT technologies — smart technologies Robinson & Schänzel (2019), also referred to as empathetic digital solutions (Zhang et al., 2025). These are practical, everyday innovations embedded in the natural rhythm of life (Zhou et al., 2023), allowing intuitive and natural use during travel without technological barriers — a characteristic feature of Generation Z (Robinson, Schänzel, 2019). They streamline everyday tourism practices by providing simplicity and functionality in areas such as payments, planning, booking and communication (Konieczna, Trybuś-Borowiecka, 2025; Zhou et al., 2023; Ratna et al., 2024; Robinson, Schänzel, 2019).

Two main categories of innovations can be distinguished. The first comprises innovations based on operational IT technologies – smart technologies (Robinson, Schänzel, 2019), also referred to as empathetic digital solutions (Zhang et al., 2025). These are practical, everyday solutions embedded in the natural rhythm of life (Zhou et al., 2023), intuitive and seamlessly accompanying travel without technological barriers, which is typical for Generation Z (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). They enhance everyday tourism practices, offering simplicity and functionality in areas such as payment, planning, booking and communication (Konieczna, Trybuś-Borowiecka, 2025; Zhou et al., 2023; Ratna et al., 2024; Robinson, Schänzel, 2019).

The second category includes products and services based on immersive digital technologies, such as blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality (MR) – the metaverse (Buhalis et al., 2023). These solutions

transform the way tourism services are designed, delivered and experienced, enhancing efficiency, personalisation and user value (Zhang et al., 2025; Ratna et al., 2024; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2019; Konieczna, Trybuś-Borowiecka, 2025) and enable experiences unattainable in the physical world (Koohang et al., 2023). Research on the impact of smart tourism technologies on tourist experiences confirms that these technologies significantly contribute to shaping intense emotions and immersive experiences during travel, thereby influencing overall tourist satisfaction (Buonincontri, Micera, 2016). Studies show that smart tourism technologies enhance connectivity, engagement, personalization, and co-creation (Buonincontri, Micera, 2016; Liberato et al., 2018).

The implementation of innovations is particularly visible in the accommodation sector, theme parks and leisure facilities (Krizaj et al., 2012; Booyens, Rogerson, 2016; Panfiluk, 2021). It should be emphasised that, from the tourist perspective, leisure services are optional, and often luxury goods (Divisekera, Nguyen, 2018) thus, only a high level of creativity and innovation can attract customer interest and loyalty. According to Pires (2020), technological innovations in hotels are introduced in guest service processes, including automation/self-service technologies (SST), radio frequency identification (RFID) and intelligent agent technologies (IAT). Rooms are equipped with features such as music systems, video game consoles and satellite TV. Such differentiation and novelty influence new experiences and memories (Elshaer, Marzouk, 2024). Theme parks introduce diverse scenography, decorations and staging inspired by history, nature and fantasy worlds, building atmosphere and intensifying tourist experiences and emotions (Chybalska, 2008)). Cultural facilities, particularly museums, personalize visitor experiences, using text, sound, still and moving images, AR, VR, MR and AI technologies to enhance interactivity, understanding of exhibits and access to additional information (Kasperska, 2014; Kap, 2016; Sawczuk, 2019).

2.2. Generation Z – Consumption Trends in Tourism Services

Generation Z, commonly referred to as “digital natives” Pichler et al. (2021), comprises individuals born between 1995 and 2010 (Su et al., 2019). They are characterized by traits such as impatience, demand for instant delivery, individualism, autonomy, high expectations, and materialism. Their consumption values center around the pursuit of unique, limitless, and ethical products Francis et al. (2018), while their consumer behavior is shaped by sensory, emotional and social experiences, which positively increases their acceptance of novelty (Kim et al., 2020; Stone, Sthapit, 2024).

For Generation Z, travel represents primarily a form of leisure and relaxation, as well as an opportunity to gain new experiences and engage with the culture of the destination (Haddouche, Salomone, 2018; Pricope Vancia et al., 2023). Tourists belonging to this cohort seek authentic, aesthetically appealing and environmentally friendly destinations promoting active leisure and direct contact with nature (Stylos et al., 2021; Pricope Vancia et al., 2023). Their travel choices are increasingly shaped by the desire for emotional and aesthetic

experiences, aligned with the experience-driven travel trend, in which ambience, uniqueness and atmosphere outweigh price or transport accessibility (Kim et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2025). Accordingly, destination choice is influenced by the attractiveness and diversity of tourism attractions, the availability of services (food, entertainment, recreation), accommodation, and the friendliness and helpfulness of the local community (Basa et al., 2023). They choose both natural landscapes and urban recreational areas. Local distinctiveness and regional authenticity remain critical factors reinforcing the perceived authenticity of the experience (European Travel Commission, 2020). Social media visibility also plays a key role; the presence of “Instagram-worthy locations” is a significant criterion in destination choice, as young travellers willingly share travel photos and videos (Stylos et al., 2021).

Generation Z more frequently engages in active tourism, allowing for nature-based discovery, interaction with local culture and participation in commercial mass culture (Robinson, Schänzel, 2019). This cohort demonstrates openness to innovation and novel travel forms (Haddouche, Salomone, 2018; Robinson, Schänzel, 2019; Kettera, 2021) and emphasises personalised experiences, enabling the creation of individual travel scenarios tailored to personal preferences (Kim et al., 2020; Thangavel et al., 2022). Consequently, they reject traditional organized travel forms in favour of travelling with friends or family (Nemec Rudež, 2023). They prefer shorter trips of 2-3 days but taken more frequently than once a year (Pricope Vancia et al., 2023; Basa et al., 2023).

Travel intentions and destination choices among Generation Z are strongly driven by user-generated content (UGC) and short-form video content (Zhou et al., 2023). They also make use of travel websites, search engines and booking platforms (Stepaniuk, Misiewicz, 2025), highlighting the pivotal role of social media in decision-making processes. Moreover, they rely on recommendations from friends and acquaintances and consult online reviews and ratings of tourism service providers (Nemec Rudež, 2023; Basa et al., 2023; Pricope Vancia et al., 2023). Only one-tenth of Generation Z leaves travel-information searching to others (Nemec Rudež, 2023). However, this group trusts friends and family more than information from websites, indicating cautiousness in travel decision-making (Monaco, 2018).

Based on the above, the following hypotheses are proposed for Generation Z residing in Central and Eastern Europe: H1: they are active travelers, travelling more than once a year, predominantly with friends; H2: they travel primarily for leisure rather than educational purposes; H3: natural and cultural assets are decisive factors in destination choice; H4: destination choice is based on information obtained from social media.

2.3. The Role of Technological Innovations in Generation Z’s Tourist Travel

Studies indicate that Generation Z most frequently uses intuitive and functional smart technologies, such as mobile applications, cashless payments, flight search engines and booking platforms (Ratna et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2025). Between 87% and 95% of young tourists use smart technologies at the planning, booking and travel stages, strengthening their sense of

control and autonomy (Konieczna, Trybuś-Borowiecka, 2025; Zhou et al., 2023). In contrast, significantly lower usage is observed for advanced technologies such as AI, VR, MR and blockchain. Experimental research demonstrates that approximately 68% of respondents use AI-based tools (chatbots, recommendation systems), while 41% have experienced metaverse-type interactions (Zhang et al., 2025). VR is attracting growing interest—participants report positive emotional reactions and increased travel intentions after immersive virtual experiences (Henríquez-Jara et al., 2025). However, active VR/AR use remains below 15% (Yung, Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). Blockchain adoption is marginal—around 61% of hotels are testing or planning blockchain applications, mainly in payment and guest data verification (Chen et al., 2024). Tourists' actual use remains low, although willingness to adopt trust-enhancing technologies is high (Ratna et al., 2024).

Despite expecting broad access to new technologies and devices providing autonomy, speed and convenience (Priporas et al., 2017; Walters et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2025) Generation Z is not fully aware of the real potential of advanced technological solutions (Buhalis et al., 2023; Kotler et al., 2021). As noted by Kotler et al. (2021), digitalization in this group occurs mainly at a surface rather than transformational level. New tools are helpful at the planning stage but do not replace human interaction or sensory experience in the real world of tourism (Pricope Vancia et al., 2023).

3. Materials and Methods

In this study, the research methodology was developed on the basis of an identified research gap arising from the current state of knowledge presented in the literature. An analysis of existing publications revealed a limited scope of research concerning Generation Z, indicating the need for a deeper exploration of this topic. Previous authors emphasize the insufficient recognition of the tourism interests of Generation Z, including innovations involving advanced technologies, and highlight the need for further empirical and theoretical research. In response to these recommendations, and to address the identified gap, methodological assumptions enabling a comprehensive examination of the research problem were adopted.

To collect empirical data, a survey method was applied using a CAWI questionnaire, following the principles of the Tailored Design Method (TDM) (Dillman et al., 2014). This method enables the identification of the existing situation in relation to the research objective. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section focused on examining tourism activity and travel purposes. The second part investigated tourists' expectations. The third section consisted of demographic questions. The questionnaire contained semi-open questions with an extended set of qualitative response options. Respondents were allowed to select up to three answers.

The primary research was conducted between April and June 2023 using CAWI techniques and social media platforms. In total, 385 respondents participated in the study, including 185 Generation Z tourists.

Among the respondents, 51% were women and 46% men, with secondary (63%) and tertiary (20%) education, which corresponds to the age of the participants (18-28 years), some of whom were still studying. Most respondents lived in cities with between 151,000 and 500,000 inhabitants (49%), while 16% lived in rural areas and 9% in smaller towns. This structure reflects the demographic profile of young Polish representatives of Generation Z. To analyze the data, the percentage distribution of responses and comparisons between groups based on travel frequency were applied. In this research, a GenAI tool was used during the analysis and conclusion-drawing stage. The obtained material was checked for substantive correctness, i.e., the accuracy of the content, the concepts used, and its alignment with the research objectives. The material was then verified for consistency with the research results, discrepancies and repetitions were removed, the interpretation was refined, and the text was supplemented. The material, which underwent verification and validation, underwent final editing and adaptation to academic style. As a result of the applied procedures, the final interpretation of the results, the formulation of theoretical implications, and practical conclusions constitute the author's original contribution.

4. Results

4.1. Travel Preferences among Generation Z

The research findings allow for the identification of tourism activity, travel motivations and goals, and the significance of innovation in tourist travel. The results were subjected to quantitative analysis.

Most respondents are active travelers. Most travel domestically 2-3 times per year (46%), while 62% travel abroad—usually once a year (34%) (table 1).

Table 1.
Frequency of travel

Travel frequency	Travel	
	abroad	domestically
more than three times a year	10%	17%
two or three times a year	18%	46%
once a year	34%	30%
don't travel at all	38%	6%

Source: own study based on research.

Respondents prefer travelling with friends; every third representative of Generation Z also travels independently, and one in five declares travelling with a partner or children (Figure 1). The results confirm Hypothesis 1: representatives of Generation Z are active travelers who travel more than once a year, predominantly in the company of friends.

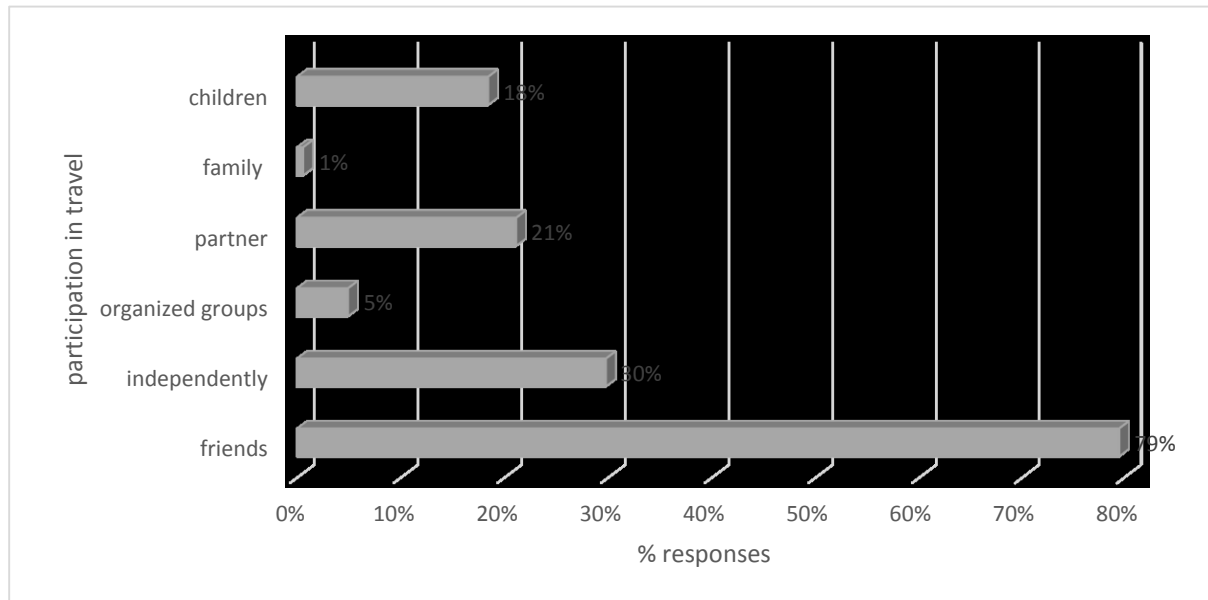


Figure 1. Forms of participation in travel.

Source: own based on research.

Respondents prefer leisure-oriented travel (76%), followed by educational/sightseeing trips (55%), entertainment travel (45%) and recreational trips (46%). Visits to family and friends constitute a supplementary motive (38%). Accordingly, the results confirm Hypothesis 2: representatives of Generation Z travel more frequently for leisure purposes than for cognitive or educational purposes.

Generation Z prefers destinations with favorable climates (69%), characterized by a high number of sunny and rain-free days. Natural and cultural sites, as well as recreational facilities and cultural events, are equally attractive to them. Price (36%) plays a secondary role – young tourists are willing to pay more for authentic and meaningful experiences. For some respondents, unique trails and landmarks (25%) and recreational opportunities (10%) also held importance – figure 2.

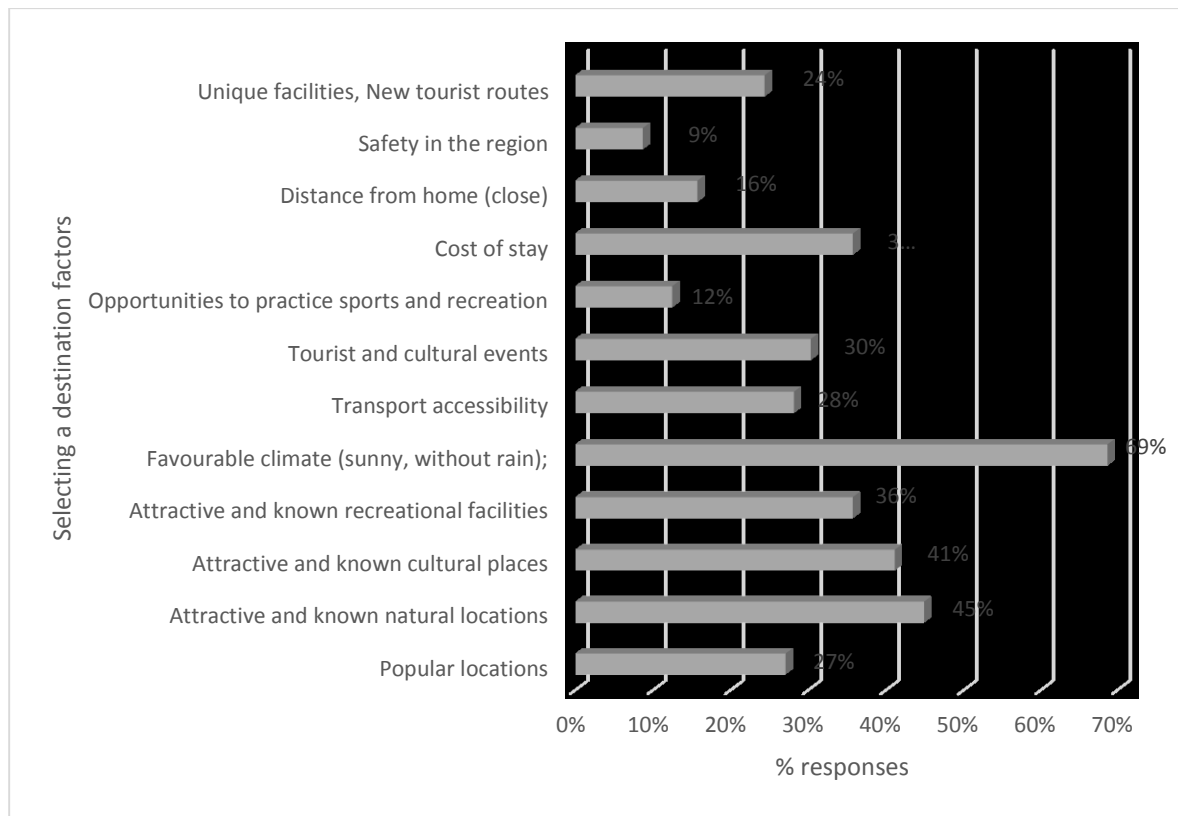


Figure 2. Destination selection factors.

Source: own based on research.

Respondents favor less crowded, authentic locations offering easy access and a pleasant climate, reinforcing their need to balance relaxation, experience and travel comfort. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is not supported by the findings. The choice of destination is predominantly determined by sunny and rain-free weather conditions conducive to leisure, rather than by natural and cultural assets.

Online advertising (72%) and social media (65%) constitute the primary sources of tourism information for respondents, while recommendations from friends also play an important role (33%). Only a small proportion of respondents use traditional media (television – 16%, radio – 12%). Tourist information centers, books and conferences likewise hold limited importance – table 2.

Table 2.

Sources of tourist information

Source of information	Activity of respondents
Advertising on the Internet	72%
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)	65%
Specialist web services	14%
Friends	33%
Radio advertising	12%
Advertising on television	16%
Scientific books	6%
Magazines	5%
Conferences	9%

Cont. table 2.

By telephone, e.g. information center, hotel accommodation service	6%
Video blogs	14%
Documentary/scientific films	8%
QR codes in tourist regions	3%
Tourist information point	3%
Guide in the region	2%
other	1%

Source: own based on research.

The results confirm the dominant role of digital channels in communicating with young tourists and indicate the need to tailor promotional activities to the online environment, which is consistent with Hypothesis 4.

4.2. Engagement with Innovative Solutions in the Course of Travel

The analysis of Generation Z's interest in the introduction of modern solutions in hotel facilities shows that the greatest interest lies in the introduction of IT technologies to guest services (use of applications), such as check-in, check-out and hotel door opening (58%), and the use of modern, innovative solutions in the facilities, contributing to raising the quality of service (56%) (Table 3). This indicates the increasing role of technology used in customer service and the expectation of a high quality of service. Complementary hotel infrastructure: swimming pools, saunas, car parks, SPA and high quality of hotel service staff are important factors influencing customer satisfaction, although they are not the most important elements determining satisfaction. Although other factors such as the fancy/unique design and internal solutions within a facility (e.g. hotel on wheels, hotel in the tree), and leisure animation offer may attract the attention of customers, they are not the key factors influencing guest satisfaction. It is also worth noting the limited importance of the use of robots in customer service. In summary, a hotel that implements smart technology, solutions to provide quality guest service and to deliver a positive guest experience through apps can achieve higher customer satisfaction and better business results.

Table 3.

Level of interest in innovative solutions in hotels

Specification	Structure
The facility uses modern, innovative solutions to enhance the quality of the service	56%
Use of applications in guest services (check-in, check-out opening hotel doors)	58%
Complementary hotel infrastructure: swimming pools, saunas, car parks, spa	37%
Fancy/unique design and internal solutions of the facility (e.g. hotel on wheels, hotel in a tree)	19%
Leisure time animation offer	14%
High quality service by hotel staff	25%
Robots serving customers	15%

Source: own based on research.

An analysis of Generation Z's expectations regarding the use of modern solutions in a recreational facility (Table 4) allows us to conclude that the greatest interest is aroused by new types of facilities that do not exist anywhere (59%), solutions for unusual ways of moving

around the facility (e.g. unmanned train, etc.) (45%) and facilities equipped with modern technological solutions (e.g. slides, with virtual reality technology) (44%). These solutions are a very attractive and desirable addition to a leisure facility's offer by the representatives of Generation Z, significantly increasing the attractiveness of leisure by those seeking new and unique experiences. Intelligent management systems and smart equipment rentals can improve the efficiency and comfort of the guest experience, which can affect guest satisfaction. A smart virtual personal trainer also has a role to play, although it is not the most important factor in determining guest satisfaction

In conclusion, a new type of leisure facility can arouse the interest of tourists using unique and innovative solutions, including technological solutions, which will allow for an unusual experience, consequently contributing to the satisfaction of visitors and business success.

Table 4.

Level of interest in innovative solutions in recreational facility

Specification	Structure
A new type of object not found anywhere else	59%
Unusual way of getting around the facility (e.g. unmanned queue, etc.).	45%
Equipment using modern technological solutions (e.g. slides with virtual reality technology)	44%
Equipment with intelligent management systems	30%
Smart equipment rental	29%
Intelligent virtual coach (personal)	13%
other	2%

Source: own based on research.

The survey concerning the factors influencing interest in the museum offer (Table 5) carried out among Generation Z representatives indicates that the museum offer should include an interesting new exhibition (53%). Moreover, respondents believe that interest in a museum's offer is determined by the cultural value of the museum (39%) as well as the interest of potential visitors (34%). The value of the offer is increased by modern, innovative solutions (e.g. holograms, virtual books), unconventional way of moving around the object (e.g. stereoscopic 3D glasses) (38%), or the use of e.g. VR technology and interactive exhibitions. These factors suggest that Generation Z is attracted to fresh and intriguing content. From the point of view of the use of modern technology solutions such as 3D stereoscopic glasses, VR technology, and interactive exhibitions are indicated as complementary elements and only by a few respondents, suggesting that they may still be considered experimental solutions. This means that Generation Z's interaction with information technology is only superficial, mostly referring to the use of devices to enhance their activities, with little reference to enhancing experiences and emotions. It should also be pointed out that offers in the form of virtual changing rooms and escape rooms with historical themes are less popular compared to other solutions and offers, suggesting that these types of attractions may be more niche and not of interest to the majority.

Table 5.
Level of interest in the museum offer

Specification	Structure
Interesting new exhibition at the museum	53%
Cultural value	39%
Virtual dressing room (e.g. clothing from different eras)	10%
Escape-room with a historical theme	22%
The facility uses modern, innovative solutions (e.g. holograms, virtual books)	38%
Virtual museums (e.g. VR technology)	6%
Unconventional way of moving around the site (e.g. 3D stereoscopic glasses)	24%
Interactive exhibitions	18%
Interests	34%
Other	1%

Source: authors' own elaboration based on the conducted research.

In summary, the museum's offers should be geared towards innovative exhibitions of high cultural value. It is also important to consider the diverse preferences and interests of visitors, so that the offers should also cater to niche interests. It is important for museums to build their offers based on modern technological solutions. As the results of the study indicate, this will allow entrepreneurs to create innovative offers that are ahead of mass needs and compete on the tourism market.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Representatives of Generation Z residing in a Central European country prefer leisure-oriented travel that also incorporates cognitive, entertainment and recreational elements. The vast majority of Generation Z favours active outdoor recreation, as evidenced by their preference for regions with a high number of sunny and rain-free days. In addition, they are attracted by natural and cultural sites as well as recreational facilities. Novelty and uniqueness of a destination also generate interest. These findings are consistent with studies by Basa et al. (2023) and Akgış İlhan et al. (2022) who indicate that Generation Z is interested in both biotic and abiotic landscapes.

Most respondents prefer destinations that meet their expectations in terms of attractiveness and quality, as seen in their willingness to incur higher travel costs, although price is not the decisive factor. One in four respondents pays attention to unique attractions and new tourism trails, whereas one in ten values sports and recreational opportunities at the destination. Although destination popularity is among the factors considered by one in four tourists, it is not the most important element for Generation Z, who appear to favour less crowded and more authentic locations.

The dominant information sources used by Generation Z when searching for tourism destinations are online channels, which aligns with findings from previous studies (Kim et al., 2020; Monaco, 2018; Setiawan et al., 2018; Nemeč Rudež, 2023; Orea-Giner, Fusté-Forné,

2023). The most influential media are online advertisements, social media platforms and peer reviews. This result is consistent with the findings of Monaco (2018), Khare et al. (2020), Ahani et al. (2019), Nemeč Rudež (2023), Orea-Giner, Fusté-Forné (2023), Basa et al. (2023) and Vancia et al. (2023), Pricope Vancia et al. (2023). A significant role of specialized tourism platforms was not confirmed—they serve only as supplementary sources of information, which corresponds with the findings of Basa et al. (2023). In addition, video blogs appear to be of limited importance. This result differs from the conclusions of Pop et al. (2022), Orea-Giner, Fusté-Forné, (2023), Pricope Vancia et al. (2023) and Orea-Giner, Fusté-Forné (2023), who point to a strong influence of social-media influencers as a source of travel information and inspiration (Pricope Vancia et al., 2023).

Within the destination, respondents seek new, attractive facilities offering distinctive solutions and innovative attractions that may significantly enhance the tourism experience. This finding is consistent with Stylos et al. (2021) who emphasise that the motivation for travel among Generation Z is to visit distinctive and original places that evoke emotions and highlight the uniqueness of the tourism experience. Basa et al. (2023) similarly confirms that destination choice is driven by the potential for positive, high-value experiences, which in turn foster loyalty behaviours (Basa et al. 2023).

In holiday packages, respondents show a preference for solutions that facilitate their stay, based on IT technologies and modern, innovative features within the property that improve service quality. The strongest interest is generated by new types of accommodation facilities with unique, modern and unprecedented solutions that significantly enhance the attractiveness of leisure experiences for travellers seeking novelty and emotional stimulation.

These results are consistent with Haddouche & Salomone (2018), Robinson, Schänzel (2019) and Ketter (2021), who demonstrate that Generation Z travellers are highly open to novelty and enjoy co-creating personalised tourism experiences (Robinson, Schänzel, 2019). As Priporas et al. (2017) argue, this cohort expects broad access to diverse electronic devices and digital processes, enabling greater autonomy and faster transactions. These findings also align with Kim et al. (2020), Thangavel et al. (2022), who note that Generation Z values customized tourism offerings tailored to their individual needs and preferences, as well as with Akgış İlhan et al., (2022) , who show that Generation Z selects forms of tourism that deliver highly valued, unique experiences.

Respondents also expressed diverse expectations regarding additional personalized solutions aligned with their interests, enabling them to experience unique moments. Although these expectations were mentioned by a smaller share of participants, they included services and products employing advanced technologies such as 3D stereoscopic glasses, VR technology, interactive exhibitions, robots, virtual fitting rooms, and smart virtual personal trainers. This suggests that such solutions may still be perceived as experimental. This result may support Buhalis & Karatay (2022), Kotler et al. (2021) argument that “digitalization occurs mainly at a surface level, and not yet at a transformative level”, as most technological

engagement concerns tools facilitating operational activities rather than enhancing emotional experiences. Similar findings were reported by Buhalis et al. (2022) and Pricope Vancia et al., (2023) who observed that Generation Z is not yet fully aware of the potential applications of advanced technologies, particularly virtual reality, in tourism services (Pricope Vancia et al., 2023).

The data obtained allow for the identification of several common features that influence Generation Z's interest in tourism offerings and contribute to satisfaction with the tourism destination experience.

Generation Z is particularly attracted to:

- novelty and innovation: solutions that are original and unconventional, making a stay more engaging and interesting,
- uniqueness: tourism facilities offering something unavailable elsewhere, serving as distinctive travel motivations,
- interactivity: experiences that actively engage visitors rather than positioning them as passive observers,
- technology: the use of modern technologies such as mobile applications, virtual reality or smart management systems, enhancing convenience and providing new experiences,
- personalization: solutions aligned with guests' interests and preferences, increasing satisfaction and engagement during the stay.

Theoretical and Practical Implications and Future Research Directions

This study contributes to the growing body of research on Generation Z's tourism behavior by identifying the differentiation in their attitudes toward immersive and non-immersive innovations and by integrating these insights into the broader framework of innovation adoption in tourism. The findings extend existing theoretical discussions on the role of technological advancement in shaping contemporary travel experiences, confirming that innovation acceptance among young tourists depends not only on technological sophistication but also on perceived usefulness, simplicity, and emotional value. An important direction for the development of product innovations is their considerable diversity, based on niche tourist preferences. This will allow personalization of tourism offers and accessibility to diverse tourist segments.

From a practical perspective the research results provide clear guidance on adapting the tourism offer to the needs and expectations of Generation Z representatives living in Central Europe. The preferences identified for this group concern both the factors determining destination choice and expectations regarding accommodation services, recreational facilities, and cultural institutions. This allows for the formulation of practical recommendations for entrepreneurs in the tourism sector.

In the area of accommodation services, research indicates that young tourists value technological solutions that improve their stay and enhance the quality of service the most. The most popular are self-service management applications (check-in, check-out, door opening), as well as modern technologies used to improve comfort and service flow. Therefore, it is proposed that the following solutions be included in their development strategies: implementing digital operational technologies, especially mobile applications for guest services, using innovative hospitality solutions that enhance convenience and personalization of services, and creating distinguishing features of the property (design, unusual forms of accommodation) as an additional factor in building attractiveness.

Regarding recreational facilities, Generation Z shows a clear interest in a unique, experience-based offering. The most excellent attention is drawn to new types of objects, unusual ways of moving around the area, and attractions utilizing immersive technologies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the directions of change should aim towards the realization of: unique facilities and attractions ("one of a kind") that cannot be found elsewhere, the implementation of unconventional methods of transportation (e.g., autonomous trains, themed transport), the integration of VR/AR technology in recreational devices, including motion attractions, the introduction of intelligent facility management systems and smart equipment rentals, increasing user comfort, offering interactive, partially personalized forms of recreation.

In the case of a museum's offerings, the substantive content and the novelty of its exhibitions are key. Technologies play a supplementary role – they increase attractiveness, but they are not a key motivator for visits. Therefore, the museum's offerings should include: regular creation of new, interesting exhibitions of high cultural value; the use of technology (holograms, virtual books, 3D stereoscopy) as tools to support the narrative; the development of interactive exhibition elements that increase visitor engagement; offering attractions aimed at niche interest groups (e.g., themed escape rooms) as a supplement to the main offerings; maintaining a balance between modern tools and the authenticity of the content, which is particularly important to young tourists.

Additionally, the results clearly indicate the dominant role of digital media in the information gathering and travel decision-making process of Generation Z. Therefore, it is proposed: conducting marketing activities online (social media, advertising campaigns, video content, Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube), taking into account the authenticity of the message and peer recommendations as key elements influencing this group's decisions.

In summary, tourism sector entrepreneurs who implement intuitive operational technologies, offer unique and engaging experiences, and base their communication on digital channels have the most excellent chance of effectively reaching Generation Z. Integrating modern solutions with authenticity and high-quality services can be a competitive advantage in the rapidly developing tourism services market.

Another research direction should be the analysis of barriers limiting the adoption of immersive technologies (VR, AR, MR) by Generation Z. It is necessary to investigate why the group known as "digital natives" only use advanced tourism technologies superficially and which factors – functional, emotional, and cognitive – condition their scepticism towards immersive solutions.

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